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Escalation in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #3

09 Oct 2023

KEY POINTS

Information on humanitarian needs is as of 12:00, while casualty figures and the number of people displaced are updated as of 21:00.

- Exchanges of fire in the towns and communities in Israel surrounding Gaza continued for the third consecutive day following the infiltration of members of Palestinian armed groups into Israel. Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continued to fire rockets into Israel. Simultaneously, Israeli forces continued with intensified air, naval and land strikes throughout the night and day.

- As of 21:00 today, according to Israeli media, more than 900 Israelis, including foreign nationals, were killed, making it the deadliest attack in Israel in decades. At least 2,616 people were injured, according to the Ministry of Health in Israel. According to Israeli sources, more than 50 members of Israeli forces and Israeli civilians, including women and children, were captured and forcibly taken into Gaza. Palestinian armed groups in Gaza claim to have captured and forcibly taken into Gaza over 150 people.

- As of 21:30, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, at least 687 Palestinians have been killed and 3,800 others injured. An additional 17 Palestinians, including four children were killed and 295 were injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank.

- Mass displacement has escalated in the past 24 hours across the Gaza Strip, reaching over 187,518, and is expected to increase further. Over 137,427 of the displaced are taking shelter in UNRWA schools. About 3,000 Palestinians in Gaza are still displaced following previous escalations.

- Since the start of the escalation of hostilities, four schools and eight healthcare facilities in Gaza have sustained damage.

Palestinians in Gaza city inspect the damage following an Israeli airstrike, 9 October 2023, photo by Mahmud HAMS / AFP

HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

- Hostilities have continued during the reporting period, resulting in additional Palestinian and Israeli casualties and property damage and a significant rise in internally displaced persons (IDPs).

- By this afternoon, over 187,518 people in Gaza are believed to have fled their homes, with UNRWA hosting 137,427 in 83 schools, some of which operated as emergency shelters. The number of IDPs represents the highest number of people displaced since the 50-day escalation of hostilities in 2014, which was the deadliest escalation recorded in Gaza since 1967. Additionally, it is estimated that over 41,000 IDPs, whose homes have been destroyed or damaged, are hosted by relatives and neighbours. During the night of 9 October, Israeli forces issued evacuation orders to Palestinian communities in the Middle Area of Gaza and in Khan Yunis, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands of people who have been told to relocate into the centre of Gaza city amid ongoing hostilities.

- Israeli airstrikes and land shelling continued overnight and throughout the day for the third consecutive day. Destruction of infrastructure and streets has hindered the movement of civil defense and medical teams to reach victims.

- On 9 October at around 0:20 hours, Israeli forces reportedly struck a residential building with six missiles in Al Qarara, northeast of Khan Yunis, killing five members of the same family, including a 67-year-old woman and two girls aged 12- and nine-years-old.

- On 9 October, at around 1:25 hours, Israeli forces struck a residential building in Rafah, reportedly killing 21 Palestinians, including children and women.

- On 9 October, around 12:00 hours, Israeli forces struck an area in Jabalia Refugee Camp, reportedly killing an estimated 50 Palestinians and causing extensive damage. The Civil Defense and medical teams are still unable to reach the area.

- According to the Gaza Ministry of Public Works and Housing, 790 housing units have been destroyed, while 5,330 have suffered severe damage. Human rights organizations have expressed concerns regarding incidents where what appear to be civilian objects and civilians have been hit by Israeli airstrikes.

- Additional damage to essential infrastructure has been reported across the Gaza strip. Since the start of the escalation, Israeli airstrikes damaged three facilities used for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), undermining provision of services to over 400,000 in Gaza city and the Northern Area of the Gaza Strip.

- According to the UN there have been 13 attacks on healthcare facilities in the Gaza Strip since 7 October. These attacks have resulted in six fatalities among healthcare workers, four injuries, and have affected eight healthcare facilities and nine ambulances.

- During the night of 8 October, airstrikes targeted An Naseer Hospital in Khan Yunis and Al Quds Hospital in Gaza City, as well as two centers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Jabalia and Gaza City. Gaza's hospitals and other health facilities are only partially functioning due to severe shortages of medical supplies and the fuel needed to operate backup generators.

- Separately, shrapnel fell inside an UNRWA school in Jabalia Refugee Camp in the Northern Area, and two additional schools sheltering displaced families were damaged due to Israeli airstrikes. This brings to four the number of UNRWA schools damaged since the beginning of the current round of hostilities.

- Since the evening of 7 October, the Israeli authorities have ceased supplying electricity to the Gaza Strip, reducing the hours of electricity to 3-4 per day. The Gaza Power Plant is currently the only source of power and could run out of fuel within days. In the evening of 8 October, the Israeli authorities decided to cut off the water supply to Gaza through the three connection points. The connection point with Khan Yunis had been reduced from 800 to 450 cubic meters per hour the previous evening. This decision affects over 610,000 people in Gaza and will result in a severe shortage of already scarce drinkable water, inevitably affecting the water quality within the distribution network.

- Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings remain closed due to the hostilities. An estimated 130 referral patients and their companions from the Gaza Strip are unable to cross Beit Hanoun (Erez) checkpoint to reach scheduled medical appointments each day. The Rafah crossing with Egypt was open today for the movement of people; about 800 people exited and about 500 people managed to enter. However, Rafah was closed today for the movement of goods.

- Palestinian armed groups in Gaza have fired thousands of rockets and mortar shells into Israel since the current round of hostilities began on 7 October, with some rockets reaching Jerusalem area, the Tel Aviv metropolitan alongside southern Israel, including Ashkelon and Ashdod. Israeli sources claim to have regained control of towns and communities around the Gaza Strip as fighting continues in these areas with the perimeter fence still breached.

- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces have continued for the third consecutive day in multiple locations. Between 7 and 9 October, as of 16:00, 15 Palestinians, including four children, were killed by Israeli forces in various areas across the West Bank. A total of 295 Palestinians, including 34 children, were injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Most of the injuries (272) were reported in various demonstrations in solidarity with residents of the Gaza Strip, during which confrontations were reported between Palestinians who threw stones and, in some instances, opened fire and Israeli forces who responded with live fire. Another 23 injuries were reported following settler attacks and entries

into Palestinian communities, accompanied by Israeli forces. Overall, 160 Palestinians were treated for teargas inhalation, 83 were shot with live ammunition, 30 were injured by rubber bullets, five were hit by shrapnel or teargas canisters, and 17 were physically assaulted.

- The Israeli authorities have continued to impose multiple movement restrictions, including the closure of several checkpoints and the blocking of entrances to towns and cities across the West Bank. This has been done either by closing road gates or erecting earth mounds disconnecting cities and towns from the main roads in the West Bank for the third consecutive day. Closures of checkpoints around East Jerusalem were partially eased while flying checkpoints were set up at entrances of Palestinian neighborhoods in the city. All checkpoints segregating part of the Israeli-controlled area of Hebron (H2) from the rest of the city were closed for the third consecutive day, impeding the movement of 7,000 Palestinian residents and preventing them from reaching essential services.
- All education facilities in the West Bank have been closed for the third consecutive day, affecting more than 1.5 million children.
- Humanitarian needs across the OPT continue to rise, the response to which is impeded by a current lack of access.

Protection

Priority Needs

- Psychosocial support (PSS) for affected families.
- 50,000 Dignity Kits for women and men.
- Cash assistance for the host community and protection cases, women, and families in Designated Emergency Shelters.
- Emergency referral pathways for gender-based violence (GBV).
- Enhance the infrastructure for GBV remote services through solving the electricity shortages and internet disruptions (by providing power banks, phones, tablets, etc.).

Response to Date

- GBV remote services activated with already existing survivors. Services include PSS counselling, legal, case management, and family visitations and other remote services for 572 people.
- Counting and procuring dignity kits: GBV partners have 650 dignity kits ready for distribution with at least 600 more being procured.
- Child Protection Area of Responsibility/MHPSS: Scaled up capacity of helplines and remote psychosocial support and referral to other services for children and their caregivers.
- Dissemination of ERW messages.
- MHPSS and CP partners continued their hotline services to provide remote MHPSS services and guidance.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Lack of electricity/Internet hinders frontline workers to connect children with their parents during family visitation services.
- Limited supplies of non-food items (NFIs), including number of available dignity kits (650).

- Limited access to basic emergency information (ambulances, police, and civil defense).
- Closure of offices of service providers due to security concerns;
- Safety risks and hazards disrupt the capacity of emergency responders to mobilize.
- Lack of infrastructure to provide remote GBV protection services.

Shelter

Priority Needs

- According to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MoPWH), 5,350 housing units sustained damage, 790 destroyed or sustained severe damage and 171 are unhabitable. 316 families have been displaced so far.
- Overall, 187,518 people who had their homes destroyed or damaged and have left their homes due to protection concerns, have been internally displaced. Most are staying with host families, and 137,427 people took shelter in 83 UNRWA schools, some of which are designated emergency shelters.
- Urgent need to provide services and basic needs for the IDPs in the designated emergency shelters and provision of shelter support for the people in urban displacement.
- Provision of shelter cash assistance for IDPs (reintegration package and belongings loss compensation).

Response to Date

- 137,427 IDPs hosted at 83 UNRWA schools.
- Shelter cluster partners are verifying the needs to distribute essential NFIs in coordination with the shelter cluster and MoSD.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Movement restrictions particularly for people in urban areas.
- Lack of access to potential suppliers for shelter/NFIs and a shortage in the bedding sets in Gaza.

Health

Priority Needs

- With the high number of casualties, there is an urgent need for trauma and emergency care following the trauma pathway and the caseload continues to increase.
- The electricity cuts are affecting hospitals that now rely on back-up generators. Some hospitals have enough fuel to last only 4 days. All health facilities are partially functioning according to their respective emergency plans.
- Hospitals continue to see an unprecedented high influx of trauma patients. They are overstretched and healthcare workers overwhelmed by the caseload.
- There is an urgent need for medical disposable items which are in shortage.
- Insecurity is hindering access to essential healthcare services for the population as healthcare workers and patients are unable to reach healthcare facilities, including pregnant women of which about 455 deliver every day.

- There is increased demand for fuel for ambulances.
- Movement restrictions across the West Bank and potential risk of settler attacks at junctions has disrupted mobile clinics, UNRWA and some MoH health facilities.

Response to Date

- Fifteen out of 22 UNRWA health centres across the Gaza strip have resumed providing primary healthcare services from 09:00 – 12:00 to patients with urgent referred appointments. Treatment is provided for non-communicable diseases and critical outpatient cases. Provision of health care services through the toll-free hotline continues.
- Three specialized Emergency Medical Teams have been deployed in Shifa, Aqsa, and Najjar Hospitals in order to expand the EDs capacities and to open new spaces as a green zone.
- Health cluster partners have released prepositioned supplies worth $800,000 to hospitals in Gaza and reprogrammed $1,300,000 (USD) to procure urgently needed supplies.
- Health partners operating in Gaza are consolidating supplies and human resources to support case management at Shifa and Al Awda Hospitals.
- PRCS remains the main service provider for pre-hospital care providing ambulance services and emergency medical teams. They have activated their Operation Rooms, 42 stations and sub-stations.
- Some partners have started early rehabilitation and post-trauma services to the injured tailored to their specific needs.
- In West Bank, health cluster partners have activated SRH emergency teams at district level to help with accessing critical SRH services.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Limited/no access to essential health care services as both healthcare workers and patients cannot move due to insecurity or movement restrictions.
- Health attacks on ambulance services and health facilities remain a concern.
- Shortages of some medical supplies essential for managing the injured.
- Poor funding of humanitarian health response means there are limited resources that can be adequately reprogrammed to support the emergency response.

Food Security

Priority Needs

- Priority is to provide crucial food assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinian families and to provide emergency food assistance to the IDPs already seeking shelter in UNRWA schools.
- UNRWA food operation remains on hold, disrupting the third distribution cycle for 112,759 families.
- Monitoring of shops shows a deficit in supplies of main food items: 54% decrease in wheat flour, 73% decrease in eggs, and 38% decrease in vegetables. 60% of shops interviewed report the price of eggs has increased. 30% of shops reported their wheat flour stocks will only last one week.

- Four FSS partner contracted shops were destroyed during the escalation in Gaza.
- Access to agriculture: Strawberry and tomato farmers are at risk of losing their entire seasonal production due to access restrictions.
- Inaccessibility to olive trees could lead to losing olives and oil.
- Closure of Kerem Shalom crossing means that no fodder enters Gaza. This endangers the livestock and poultry sectors affecting the livelihoods of over 10,000 producers and the provision of animal protein to Gaza.
- Lack of access and electricity cuts will affect refrigeration, irrigation, incubation, and other machinery that will affect agriculture, poultry, cattle, fish, and other products. Some imported products have started spoiling already.
- Milk produced by dairy cattle cannot be marketed to dairy factories. It is expected that 35,000 litres of milk will be spoiled daily.
- Closure of the sea puts at risk more than 4,000 fisheries.
- In the West Bank, small villages may face stock shortages within one week if access restrictions continue. Strikes and movement restrictions make accessing food difficult.

Response to Date

- FSS partners are preparing to distribute ready-to-eat food rations to 100,000 IDPs in UNRWA shelters, as well as 100,000 people outside shelters with a cash-transfer value of $12.4 (USD) per person for one month.
- FSS partners are aiming to resume food assistance to 136,000 of the most vulnerable people with a cash-transfer value of $12,4 (USD) per-person for one month of those whose assistance was suspended earlier this year and provide an additional cash top-up to 205,000 people who received their October assistance.
- Market monitoring of food availability and prices has begun.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- The closure of Kerem Shalom, Erez and Allenby Commercial terminal poses challenges for the entry of food items into Gaza.
- The Ministry of Agriculture has reported significant damage to agricultural lands and some poultry farms. However, at the moment it is impossible to carry outfield assessments, so no estimation is available for shelter damages.
- Farmers cannot access their lands for daily agricultural practices (crop service, irrigation, harvesting).
- Lack of electricity and fuel causing food products to spoil.
- The delivery of food items to North Gaza is currently blocked.

Education

Priority Needs

- All education facilities in the West Bank and Gaza are closed, affecting more than 1,400,000 children.
- Over 50 UNRWA schools (DES and non-DES) are being used for shelter and reports indicate that displaced families are taking shelter in at least 7 PA schools (Not official DES).

- The mental wellbeing of students and school staff is negatively affected by the current situation. In Gaza.
- The mental well-being of children and staff is severely affected.

Response to Date

- Provision of school-based PSS and recreational activities to at least 70,000 children and school staff as soon as the situation allows.
- Emergency rehabilitation for at least 20 damaged schools.
- Provision of emergency supplies and learning kits for 10,000 children in DES and 50,000 children in schools once they reopen.
- Provision of catch-up classes, especially to displaced children (at least 20,000 children).

Key Constraints and Gaps

- Insecurity and movement restrictions are resulting in school closure and limited access of service providers to schools.
- Electricity cuts make online distance learning almost impossible.
- $4,000,000 (USD) is needed at this stage to respond to needs in Gaza and West Bank.

WASH

Priority Needs

- All solid waste collection and transfer to landfills remains on hold.
- Two WASH facilities in the Gaza strip were affected. These facilities served over 400,000 people with water and sanitation services.
- Israel’s decision to cut the water supply to Gaza via Mekorot water company by 82% has impacted over 610,000 people in Gaza. This will result in a severe shortage of drinkable water available to the population, inevitably affecting the water quality within the distribution network.
- Gaza's current electricity generation is less than 60 MW. This falls significantly short of the necessary power to sustain WASH services across the entire Gaza Strip. Municipalities are urging residents to conserve water usage to maintain essential services, as they anticipate a drastic reduction of more than 50% in the coming days.
- There is an urgent need for an alternative power supply source. In the meantime, providing fuel (Emergency fuel of 20,000 litres/day) is needed to ensure WASH facilities in their continued operation.
- The chlorine supply for the water treatment plants, currently using the emergency supply, needs to be replenished.
- Spare parts for the water and sanitation facilities and infrastructure to be used as part of the emergency repair need to be replenished.

Response to Date

- 70,000 litres of fuel were allocated for distribution among WASH facilities experiencing power shortages.
- The operation of water wells in Jabalia, Khan Younis and Rafah is ongoing.

Key Constraints and Gaps

- The access and distribution of materials and items necessary for WASH facilities.
- Israel's decision to cut water supply to Gaza.
- The closure on the Gaza Strip poses challenges for the entry of WASH items.

Protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) remains a cross-cutting priority for all clusters. The SAWA helpline, reachable at 121 and through WhatsApp at +972 59-4040121 (East Jerusalem at 1-800-500-121), operates 24/7. This toll-free number is widely disseminated across all areas of intervention to report cases of SEA and to facilitate emergency counseling and referrals for affected communities to access life-saving services. The PSEA Network is monitoring calls daily and will increase the number of counselors if necessary